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The Next Step in Community Compacts

Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito



Happy Memorial Day Weekend! I hope this update catches you all before the long weekend ahead. Please take some time to honor the brave men and women serving our country and remember those who served before them on this important day.

Our team has been working tirelessly on turning your feedback from the Community Compact Cabinet's (CCC) survey into a workable and mutually-accountable document. This week, I hosted an internal focus group with municipal leaders from around the state to hear their input on the Compact document. Our goal was to identify and prioritize the best practices that municipalities can strive toward and solidify the commitments the state will make in order to help communities achieve them. Engaging with cities and towns ensures that these compacts are collaborative, not simply one-sided agreements, and reflect our shared

goals and visions. I am very much looking forward to the rollout and signing of the compacts this summer and I eagerly anticipate the work ahead.

To that end, our team is finalizing an accessible, public website where communities can go to apply for a compact directly. This easy-to-use tool will allow interested municipalities to choose a single best practice or multiple best practices in order to then generate a working document that will subsequently formalize an agreement with the state. The Community Compact Cabinet and its website will be clearly displayed on the mass.gov homepage and will link to the online application form. We are dedicated to providing new and useful technology both through the CCC and MassIT as evidenced by the forthcoming website and in the efforts and initiatives highlighted in MassIT's guest piece in this edition of *City & Town*.

I appreciate the support from our legislators who have approved funding for the CCC program in the budget. Technical assistance and resources will be available to our communities to help achieve best practices. Our partners in the House have fully-funded the items we included in House 1. The Senate Ways and Means budget did as well. We will continue to work with our partners in the Senate to ensure that the CCC will be properly funded to support the vital and necessary work done in cities and towns.

By signing a Compact, your community will gain a competitive advantage when applying for a number of future state grants. Grants that operate on a points system will be included in the CCC program and, in signing a compact, your community will receive a set number of points, thereby increasing the likelihood of being awarded those specific funds.

The summer rollout of the Community Compacts is approaching rapidly. I look forward to working with you all and visiting your cities and towns during what I expect to be a productive and exciting summer!

Helping Communities and Schools Leverage Technology

MassIT Office of Municipal & School Technology

As technology becomes increasingly ingrained in the way we work, live and play, our state and local governments have often struggled to keep pace. To help address our constantly evolving technology needs, last summer new enabling legislation created the Massachusetts Office of Information Technology (MassIT).

MassIT is the successor to the state's Information Technology Division (ITD), which was primarily focused on round-the-clock support of IT

operations across the executive branch of state government.

Today, as the state's lead agency for technology and innovation, MassIT continues the operational work of ITD while also addressing the broader scope and greater responsibilities laid out - along with increased authority to meet those demands - in the new legislation. An important part of that expanded scope is helping municipalities leverage technology to improve their business processes, enhance services and better meet constituent needs.

A Dedicated Team

To spearhead this work at the local level, last year MassIT launched the first-of-its-kind Office of Municipal & School Technology. From the start, the team's work has focused on going beyond outreach to delivering solutions.

With the Baker Administration's focus on supporting municipalities, including the Governor's first Executive Order and creation of the Community Compact Cabinet, together we have an incredible opportunity to effect meaningful, positive change in the way cities and towns across the state leverage technology.

By working in partnership with DLS, other state entities and communities across Massachusetts, we are engaging the state's technology resources and assets for municipal gain, helping communities connect with each other, and developing new ways of working to help us all meet business demands and constituent needs.

An Exciting Start with Wilmington

Assistant Town Manager for Wilmington Kendra Amaral connected with MassIT at this year's *CodeAcross 2015* event, a weekend-long gathering of civic innovation and engagement enthusiasts put on locally by the Boston Brigade of Code for America (<http://www.meetup.com/Code-for-Boston>). For a quick look at highlights from the event - and a glimpse of Kendra - check out MassIT's very short (and very cool!) video [here](#).

At the event, Kendra pitched the creation of an app that would bring together disparate pieces of critical property data, including building, health, public safety, tax collection, assessors, and more from various databases, into one dashboard to provide communities with at-a-glance insight.

Creation of the app is underway as a collaborative effort between Wilmington and the Commonwealth, and Kendra's experience so far has been very positive: "MassIT is serving as project coordinator and helping us advance the app in a way we could not achieve on our own. We are connected with the resources we need to make the app effective for Wilmington and, potentially, other communities." Once

complete, the app will give municipal officials, including inspectors and first responders, a more complete picture of individual properties at any given moment than is otherwise possible.

Kendra went on to say that "many cities and towns, generally outside of the Boston area, don't have the resources or capacity to identify and develop technology that will help us in our work. MassIT's commitment to this project shows the state's interest in helping a broader range of communities harness technology for municipal use. If this project is an indication of MassIT's future, the future is clearly full of potential to help cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth to effectively utilize technology and improve public service."

General Offerings and Opportunities

MassIT and DLS are partnering to offer technology assessments and will work with communities to understand their specific needs. MassIT is also providing forums for communities to explore potential solutions and collaboration with peers and helping communities help each other through online and in person sharing of information and best practices.

Cindy Knox, IT Director for the Town of Ayer noted, "We are a small town with a one-person IT staff and the MassIT office has been invaluable with their assistance. It is great to have a resource for information and someone to bounce ideas off. They have saved us so much time by facilitating demonstrations of online permitting systems."

Additional priorities include leveraging the MassBroadband123 network and state assets in western and central Massachusetts to offer affordable broadband and collaborating with state education agencies to increase connectivity for schools. Services that are currently available to municipalities include:

- **Broadband Connectivity** for town halls, fire and police departments, libraries, health centers, schools, and more in central and western Massachusetts.
- **Online Mapping** access to existing municipal data for cities, towns, and constituents in a flexible, searchable, and customizable map. To learn more about the MuniMapper tool, click [here](#).

MassIT will also provide best practice guidance to communities on a range of topics, including:

- **Cybersecurity**
- **Transparency**
- **Business Continuity**
- **Citizen Engagement**
- **Data Standards**

In partnership with the state's Executive Office of Education and Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, we offer services for schools across the state.

- **Student Information System (SIS):** a secure, web-based SIS that integrates testing, assessment analysis and school-to-home communication in one system.
- **Data Analysis through Edwin** integrates longitudinal data from pre-K to post-secondary education at student, classroom, school and district levels.
- **Funding for IT Infrastructure Upgrades** through the *Digital Connections Partnership Schools Grant*.

The *Digital Connections Partnership Schools Grant* program was created last summer by a bond bill that authorized \$38 million in matching grant funds, to be distributed to qualifying schools and districts over several years. The goal of the program is to enable teachers and students to benefit from rich, 21st century digital teaching and learning resources.

To deliver on that goal and help meet the IT needs of public schools across the state, the Office of Municipal & School Technology is working closely with the state's Executive Office of Education and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Digital Learning in a first-of-its-kind partnership.

With many school districts in need of technology upgrades, participation in the initial grant application process was high despite a short turnaround time. The first round of \$5M in funding has been allocated to 47 schools across 14 districts. For details regarding applicants and which "finalists" will receive funding in this round, [click here to see the interactive map](#).



In addition, we are working on development of additional services, including:

- **IT hosting:** colocation and back-up
- **Device purchasing for schools:** fixed, per-student pricing on devices and related professional development.

For more information, please [click here](#).

Working Together Towards a Common Goal

At MassIT, we are eager to help communities across the Commonwealth fully engage in today's digital world. By partnering with communities to leverage technology as fully as possible, we believe local governments, residents and businesses alike stand to gain economic, educational, health, public safety and other benefits.

When the lines between the technology we use and the people we serve fade away, our state and local governments will be the digital businesses our constituents expect us to be. Across the Commonwealth, we are working hard to reach that goal and eager to engage with you all as we travel this path.

To begin a conversation about how we can help your community, contact Mike Hamel, Director of MassIT's Office of Municipal and School Technology at Michael.Hamel@mass.gov or (617) 626-4501 and follow us on Twitter [@MassITMunicipal](https://twitter.com/MassITMunicipal).

A Brief Look Back: The Commissioner's Introductory

Tony Rassias - Bureau of Accounts Deputy Director

As part of its ongoing feature, "A Brief Look Back," *City & Town* will review issues that affected municipal finance in the early twentieth century as written in the Annual Reports of what is now known as the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. This month, we profile "The Commissioner's Introductory."

Introduction

Municipal borrowing was problematic. Debt could have been for either operating or capital purposes. Sinking funds were not properly provided for. Demand notes could extend the life of temporary notes indefinitely. Present costs were oftentimes directed into the future.

On January 31st, 1929, Commissioner of Corporations and Taxation Henry F. Long submitted his Annual Report for 1928 to the Honorable Massachusetts Senate and House of Representatives. In his report, he raised a concern that government spending may be escalating out of control.

The following is the Commissioner's complete introductory.

By the Commissioner

Massachusetts has not experienced any other result than higher costs of government, in the depreciating value of the dollar, changed personal standards of the people of the Commonwealth, greater demands upon government by an enlargement and extension of governmental activities, and the striking economic changes which come in the wake of modern inventions best typified by the motor vehicle.

Neither the population moving from 3,366,416 in 1910 to 3,852,356 in 1920, nor the total valuation of real estate and tangible personal property moving from approximately \$3,287,347,847 in 1910 and \$5,354,086,810 in 1920, to approximately \$6,302,801,069 in 1924, has moved as rapidly as the costs of government for the towns, cities, counties, state and districts from approximately \$102,894,895 in 1911, to approximately \$249,840,146 in 1923, and over \$260,000,000 in 1924.

The increase in motor vehicles registered in 1910 of 31,360 to 304,538 in 1920 and 672,235 in 1924, and the number of public school children registered in 1910 of 484,303 to 563,684, registered in 1920 and 649,489 in 1924 indicates reasons why we may expect in the future to have heavy demands upon government.

Have we reached the peak, or are we but at the threshold of enormously increasing governmental costs for schools, roads, activities relating to sanitation, health, both mental and physical, fire and police protection, to speak only of those major items of expenditure, which seem to be fixed charges? Or are the people to demand less of government, putting more and more into the personal budget the things that have crept into our governmental budget and increased the costs of government? Do we lack the element of thrift as communities, assuming we possess it as individuals?

These activities do not promise much in the way of direct revenue to continue them, so we must measure the benefits derived by the satisfaction of providing better living conditions for the people, but still looking to the old forms of taxation to continue to bear the burden as well as to new forms in order to more equally spread the load.

We, as a State, in Massachusetts happily do not face the dread spectre of large expenditures for interest and debt requirements, but what our cities and towns are facing makes a sad hole in the purchasing value of the revenue dollar, for current needs. The pay-as-you-go policy should be nailed down and be so much a part of us, that it will become a tradition in this Commonwealth.

Last Chance to Register for the New Officials Finance Forum

Division of Local Services

Registration is now open for The Department of Revenue's New Officials Finance Forum. The event will be held on Tuesday, June 2nd at the Courtyard Marriott in Marlborough. This course is intended for recently elected or appointed local municipal finance officials. With an emphasis on the basics, it's designed to foster a team approach to municipal finance by developing an understanding of the responsibilities of the various offices as well as their interrelationships.

The day will begin with Senior Deputy Commissioner Sean R. Cronin's opening remarks, and topics will include an overview of municipal government, the budget process, the tax recapitulation process and reserve and debt policies. We encourage municipalities to forward this information to any and all new officials who would benefit from attending.

The registration form and \$50 registration fee must be received by May 22nd. The registration form can be found by clicking [here](#). For additional information, contact Donna Quinn at (617) 626-3838 or quinnd@dor.state.ma.us.

Registering to Find Grant Funding Through COMMBUYS

Operational Services Division (OSD)

COMMBUYS, the Commonwealth's eProcurement system, is home to more than just contracts and bidding opportunities. Funding often is available to municipalities in the form of grants and also exists in the COMMBUYS Market Center as bid opportunities. While many municipalities have registered in COMMBUYS with buyer profiles, finding and responding to grant opportunities requires municipalities to also register as vendors.

Vendor registration is free and only takes a few minutes. To register, simply go to www.COMMBUYS.com and click the "Register" link to begin. Be prepared to provide the name, address, email, and Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) for the organization, business or entity registering.

A variety of resources are available to assist in the registration process:

- [Registration Guidance](#) on the OSD website
- [Vendor Registration](#) Job Aid
- [Vendor Registration](#) Webcast

Once registered, it's simple and straightforward to find funding opportunities. Using your vendor User Name and Password, log in to [COMMBUYS](#), select the seller tab and then select the advanced search logo (eyeglass next to time and date). Use the advanced search feature to select "Bids" in the "Document Type" dropdown. Use the provided fields to search for Grants.

Another useful tool to reference as you complete the grant bidding process is the "[Locate a Grant Posting and Create a Response](#)" Job Aid.

COMMBUYS Help Desk assistance is available by telephone at (888) 627-8283 or via email at COMMBUYS@state.ma.us. Help Desk hours are 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday.

May Municipal Calendar

May 1

Taxpayer

Deadline for Payment of Semi-Annual and 4th Quarterly Tax Bill Without Interest

According to MGL Ch. 59, Sec.

		57, this is the deadline for receipt of the 2nd half actual tax payment, or the actual tax payment if an optional preliminary bill was issued. According to MGL Ch. 59, Sec. 57C, this is the deadline for the 4th Quarter tax payment.
May 1	Treasurer	Deadline for Payment of Second Half of County Tax
May 1	Accountant/Treasurer	<p>Notification of Amount of Debt Due in Next Fiscal Year</p> <p>As required by MGL Ch. 44, Sec. 16, the Accountant or Treasurer must notify the Assessors of all debt due in the next fiscal year because the municipality is required to pay its debts, appropriated or not.</p> <p>Since all debt service must be paid, any debt service not covered by appropriations is added to the "Other Local Expenditures" category, found on 2 of the Tax Recapitulation Sheet. It is important that the Assessors have this information in order to avoid setting a tax rate lower than required and raising insufficient revenue to cover the municipality's expenditures.</p>
May 15	DOR/BLA	Commissioner Determines and Certifies Telephone and Telegraph Company Valuation
Final Day of Each Month	State Treasurer	<p>Notification of monthly local aid distribution.</p> <p>Click www.mass.gov/treasury/cash-management to view distribution breakdown.</p>

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